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THE COUNTY ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF SCHOOLS IN ALABAMA

AN ACT APPROVED AUGUST 16, 1915

A COMPARISON OF THE OLD LAW AND THE NEW, WITH AN EXPOSITION OF THE LATTER.

CORRECTION

Line one section 2 of the County Board Law page 29 of this pamphlet should read as follows "That at the general election of State and County officers in November 1918, the qualified electors, etc."

WM. F. FEAGIN,
Superintendent of Education,
Montgomery, Alabama.

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ALABAMA
COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

OLD LAW	NEW LAW
PERSONNEL	
Five members, four elected by the chairmen of the district trustees, the county superintendent being the fifth man.	Five members elected from the county-at-large by the legal votters, both men and women being eligible.
QUALIFICATIONS	
Qualified elector of the county.	Good moral character, at least a fair elementary education, good reputation for honesty, business ability, public spiritedness and interest in the good of public education.
TERM OF OFFICE	
Four years, the terms of all members being contemporaneous.	Six years, one or two members retiring at the end of each two-year period.
GENERAL DUTIES	
To have entire control of the public schools within their respective counties, unless otherwise provided by law; to make rules and regulations for the government of the schools; to acquire, purchase, lease, receive, hold and convey the title to real and personal property for school purposes except where otherwise provided; to sue and contract.	To have entire control of the public schools within their respective counties, unless otherwise provided by law; to make rules and regulations for the government of the schools; to acquire, purchase, by the institution of condemnation proceedings if necessary, lease, receive, hold and convey the title to real and personal property for school purposes except where otherwise provided by law; to sue and contract.

SPECIFIC DUTIES

(a). To place the county superintendent of education upon a salary basis, requiring him to give full time to the supervision of the schools.*	(a). To elect a county superintendent of education, prescribe his duties and fix his salary.
(b). To elect a county treasurer of public school funds.	(b). To elect a county treasurer of public school funds.
(c). (No corresponding power.)	(c). To elect a successor of any member whose place becomes vacant by death, resignation or otherwise, until the next regular election.
(d). To select teachers upon nomination by district trustees and to employ assistant superintendents and fix their salaries.	(d). To select upon nomination of the county superintendent of education, teachers, assistant superintendents, supervisors and office assistants and fix their salaries.
(e). To erect, repair and furnish schoolhouses, fix wages of employees and have control of the public school funds of the county except as otherwise provided by law.	(e). To erect, repair and furnish schoolhouses, fix wages of employees, determine the incidental fees and have entire control of the public school funds of the county except as otherwise provided by law.
(f). Upon proper application, publication and notice, to rearrange the boundaries of any school district.	(f). To fix the boundaries of school districts and locate schools with reference to convenience, efficiency and economy.
(g). (No authority to transport pupils at public expense).	(g). To consolidate schools and provide for the transportation of pupils at public expense.
(h).	(h). To appoint from one to three trustees for each school.
(i).	(i). To enforce compulsory attendance as required by law.
(j).	(j). To dismiss the county superintendent or any other employee for cause or when in the opinion of the board the best interests of the schools require it.
(k).	(k). To provide for taking the school census.

*It should be remembered that the county superintendent was one of the five members of the board and therefore had a right to assist in fixing his own salary.

REMUNERATION

Two dollars a day for each day's work, for not more than ten days in any one year.

Actual traveling and hotel expenses incurred in attending meetings of the board for not more than twelve meetings in any one year.

SALARIES OF COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS

Four percentum of funds disbursed not to exceed $1,800 from State funds per annum, or salary of not less than $1,000 a year.

Salary of not less than $1,000 a year.

THE ALABAMA LAW FOR THE COUNTY ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF SCHOOLS

Character of the Measure. No man has any right to advocate a change in the method of administering our public schools unless he can be sure that the innovations proposed are for the increased benefit of those concerned by such changes, and the responsibility for championing a measure that entirely recasts the method of administering our public schools is one that any citizen should seriously and deliberately weigh.

Membership. The syllabus preceding this article sets out the chief differences between the old law and the new. As for the personnnel of the board under the new law, there will be five members elected from the county at large by the qualified electors of the county, for terms of six years, one-third of the terms expiring every two years, the members to serve without pay other than expenses.

Enlarged Powers. The policies of the board under this plan will of necessity be continuous, a practical impossibility under our former plan, when all members were elected and their terms of office expired at the same time. The new board will also be free from the domination of the county superintendent, who heretofore has been a member of the board and had the power to assist in fixing his own salary. The law probably did not intend this to be so, but it was in practice a fact. The new board, elected by the people of the county from the county at large,

will be the people's board, and it will have the general oversight and direction of all educational agencies in the county, including the county superintendent.

County at Large vs. Commissioners' District.

Section 2 of the law provides that the members of the county board of education shall be elected from the county at large. There are those who would advocate the plan of selecting members from commissioners' districts, but in answer to such it may be said:

1. That electing the members from the county at large will make possible a board composed of men of the highest attainments, inasmuch as the whole county can be drawn from. There should certainly be no limitation upon the right to secure the best men in the county, no matter from what district they come.

2. That the election of board members from the county at large will tend to eliminate selfish interests, which their election from commissioners' districts would tend to develop. This is evidenced in the case of our present county commissioners, who, as a rule, represent the districts from which they come rather than the county at large, thereby making the good of the community a primary consideration and the good of the county a secondary one.

3. That the members of the county board of education should have free and unbiased control of the entire educational system of the county, and this cannot be so without a lofty type of men clothed with the widest responsibility and authority for the organization and management of the system as a whole.

4. That it is certain no higher type of board members could be secured by electing them from different districts, even though they were elected by the voters of the county as

a whole, than by electing them from the county at large, and there is strong probability that a somewhat lower type might be chosen.

5. That inasmuch as the bill provides for the appointment of a county superintendent of education by the county board, said superintendent should be elected without reference to the section of the county or country from which he comes, without any limitation upon his authority and responsibility for the supervision of the schools of the entire county and without regard to the local interests of any member of the board.

6. That under the former law there were three sources of accountability resulting often in conflicting interests: The district trustees to the people of the small territory that elected them; the county board of education to the chairmen of the district trustees who elected them; and the county superinendent of education to the people of the county as a whole who elected him. Under the new law there will be but one source of accountability, in the last analysis, namely, that of the county board of education to the people of the whole county who elected them, the county superintendent of education and the district trustees being directly responsible to the county board of education.

7. That experience wherever the plan has been employed shows that the unit of organization and the unit of administration of public schools should be one and the same for the best results.

8. That the plan of choosing the members of the board of education from the county at large has the unqualified approval and endorsement of the United States Bureau of Education, of the Southern Educational Association, and of the Conference for Education in the South,—the courts of final jurisdiction, as it were, of educational policy in the Southern States.

Additional Powers. The principal additional powers conferred upon the county boards of education under the new law include the power to select and appoint the county superintendent of education and to rearrange school districts so that schools may be located with reference to convenience, efficiency, and economy, and pupils transported, when necessary, so that consolidated schools may be established wherever it is desirable that such schools shall replace the expensive and inefficient one-teacher schools now so prevalent.

Importance of Office of County Superintendent. The most strategic official, as well as the most important, in our whole public school system, is the county superintendent of education, and he should bear at least a part of the responsibility for the inefficiency of our public schools which we have been too prone to place entirely at the door of the teacher,—though she is not blameless, inasmuch as we have something like 1,500 beginning teachers in Alabama every year, approximately 1,200 of whom have had no experience whatever other than that gained in teachers' institutes.

Disadvantages of Country Teachers. Of the 305,248 white children enrolled in the elementary public schools of the State, 233,152, or 76%, reside in rural districts. All will agree that the rural school problem demands at least equal consideration with the city school problem, and yet, that is where we have the most inexperienced teachers, the least supervision, the poorest buildings and equipment, the most irregular attendance, and oftentimes the most meager support. It has been definitely ascertained that there is an average of one expert supervisor in our eighteen largest cities for every nineteen teachers engaged in the service,—this, too, where there is only one grade to be taught by a teacher who is herself sup-

posed to be an expert. In most counties in Alabama, however, we have at least seventy-five or one hundred teachers to the supervising officer. If the town where every teacher under supervision can be seen in one day requires one supervisor for every nineteen teachers, is it fair for the country teacher who is poorly prepared both as to training and equipment, to have only one visit a year from the county superintendent? The town teacher is surrounded by a group of trained teachers with whom she may advise at any moment; the rural teacher must stand alone.

Where the Responsibility Lies.

The criticism is just, therefore, which holds that our teachers are lacking in ideals both as to what a rural school should accomplish and how it should be administered to meet the needs of the community; but teachers should not bear all of the responsibility for a blameworthiness that, so far as they are concerned, is more apparent than real. Some of the censure should be placed upon such of our county superintendents of education as have failed to furnish the intelligent leadership and direction needed.

What the Records Show.

An examination of the reports submitted to the Department of Education monthly by the county superintendents of education and covering a period of two years, discloses the fact that the so-called supervision of schools by county superintendents is inadequate:

1. The large number of school districts in any county makes it impossible for the county superintendent to spend much time in the school if he wishes to get around as much as twice during the year.

2. In a majority of the counties of the State, more than one visit to the same school in any year is infrequent, while in a considerable number of counties the average would be

about three visits to the same school within a period of five years.

3. The terms of our rural schools for whites vary from seventy-three days in Marion county to one hundred sixty-nine days in Mobile county. In the former there are eighty-four white schools with ninety-eight teachers, so that if the superintendent is to visit each school once during the year, he must remain less than one day of six hours at each school. It is therefore impossible for the superintendent to do more than make a few general observations and give a few directions. He has little, if any, opportunity to know whether his advice has been followed until his next yearly visit, when he will probably find a new teacher on the ground, inasmuch as the average term of service of the rural school teacher in his county is but little more than one year.

Mobile County. This striking fact should be remarked: That the longest school term and the longest term of service on the part of the teacher is in Mobile county where the schools have for a long time been under substantially the same plan of administration and supervision that this new law now gives to the other counties. It should also be noted that the county superintendent of education has been in office for fifteen years. This is in itself a concrete illustration right here in Alabama of what we may expect from the operation of the new law.

Visits of County Superintendent. An examination of the Annual Report of the Department shows that the number of schools in any county is, as a rule, more than the number of days in the school year in such county, so that the superintendent would be unable himself to make more than one visit of one day to each school. In actual practice, however, the number of visits of the county superintendent annually falls far below the number of schools in many instances. This will ap-

pear from the 1915 Report which credits two county superintendents with no visits whatsoever, one with one visit, two with eight, and others with twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two, tweny-three, twenty-four, thirty-five and forty-one visits, respectively. There is but one way to estimate just what effect the new law will have upon the county superintendent's performance of his duty in this particular instance, and this will appear from the following statistics:

SCHOOLS TAUGHT IN RURAL DISTRICTS

Year	White	Colored	Total
1910-11	4,331	1,855	6,186
1913-14	4,365	1,852	6,217

NUMBER OF VISITS BY COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT

1910-11	3,121	397	3,518
1913-14	6,528	1,329	7,857

The Increase Explained. It will be readily seen that the number of schools during this period has remained practically stationary while the number of visits has more than doubled. The explanation is simple: In the former scholastic year, the county superintendents were upon a percentage basis and exercised their own option about visiting schools. The salaries were not such, as a rule, to relieve them of the necessity of engaging in other work. In the latter scholastic year, many of them had been put upon a salary basis giving them an assured livelihood and enabling them to give their full time to the work. The convincing thing about it is the fact that practically all the net increase in the number of visits has come about in those counties where the county superintendents have been transferred to the salary basis, the number of visits by county su-

perintendents who are still on the percentage basis remaining almost constant.

In Extenuation.

Under the more favorable conditions, however, no county superintendent could give the amount of supervision necessary in any county, nor could he be expected to visit every day during which the schools are in session, and for the following reasons:

1. The condition of the weather and of the roads often prohibits it.

2. He has office and other routine duties to be performed.

3. Visits made at the close of the session are rarely of any worth, so far as constructive efforts are concerned.

Lack of Accountability.

Perhaps the most serious defect, so far as the elective county superintendent is concerned, is his lack of accountability to any particular authority. His responsibility to the State Superintendent is negligible and his responsibility to those who elected him is not easy to determine under the present status of politics. He must of necessity keep his eyes and ears, politically speaking, open to his future aspirations perhaps more than to the needs and opportunities of the schools and the children.

Politician vs. Supervisor.

The fact that he must, if he wishes to be re-elected, undertake to win the favor of those whom he should condemn, undoubtedly tends to prevent him, no matter how extraordinary and inflexible his character, from doing his full duty; and where there is no especial principle at stake, he naturally measures the probable effect that any act or position will have upon his future political career. It is equally as patent that the greater the need to stimulate and improve, the more dangerous it will be for him to do his

duty, if he wishes to be re-elected. The fact that twenty-nine out of the sixty-seven county superintendents were defeated at the last election shows clearly that the element of risk precludes any high degree of efficiency. It is not to be wondered, therefore, that the expense involved in running for office, the humiliation of defeat, the short tenure, and the necessity of running again at the end of four years, have not made for efficiency in the administration or in the supervision of our schools.

The System.

Nor is it fair to fix the blame upon the county superintendent for this state of affairs. It has come about as the inevitable result of the system, and that is where the new law will give much needed relief. It will take the office out of politics and place it upon the same high plane that it now is in approximately 8,000 cities of the United States. The city superintendency is regarded as a profession. Able men are attracted to it and devote their lives to the work.

Is the New Law Undemocratic?

The principal objection that has been raised to the appointive county superintendent of education is the stock one that the plan is undemocratic. The cities are not undemocratic because they appoint their city superintendents. The counties are not undemocratic because they appoint the county health officer or the county surveyor, and it should be the rule wherever skill of a special type is required. The qualifications demanded for the office of county superintendent are such that the people, under the spell of politics, are not competent to decide between candidates, and in the interests of the education of their children they should not be required to do so; nor is the opposition of the people to the present plan so often the reality it is pictured to be. Most frequently it is a subterfuge put forward by our poorer county superintendents, who see in this meas-

ure the end of their connection with the public schools of the county. To be perfectly frank about the matter, it cannot be said that the people are prepared to have any very positive opinion in the matter, for the reason that they know nothing of any other plan; and it is equally true that they would readily change their viewpoint if a different system worked more satisfactorily. What could be more foolish in an agricultural State like Alabama than to go on giving our city children a good school, well supervised for nine months, while the country children have a poor school for five or six months, and with practically no supervision. So long as the State forces the rural boy to starve educationally while his city cousin fattens, so to speak, we must be content with poor methods of farming, small crops, a poor country-folk, a continued migration from the country to the city, and an increasing farm tenancy. Never before in the history of our educational system has there been such a need for men of superior skill to pilot our schools, and this is perhaps the chief element of strength in the new law.

Appointive Power of the Board.

This law also confers upon the county board the authority to appoint practically all educational officers in the county, and it may, therefore, remove any employee, when, in the opinion of the board, the best interests of the schools require such action. The county superintendent is the executive officer of the board and his principal duties are supervisory, clerical assistance being provided to relieve him of most of the detail work. He can, therefore, give his entire time and attention to the improvement of the school system, especially the teachers in service. The fact that he has the right to nominate teachers will secure, first of all, a uniformly good teaching force, and the members of such force will feel in honor bound to carry out his policies. The board will have the authority to remove

or transfer a teacher from one school to another, when, in the judgment of the board, such change is necessary for the good of the school,—a plan followed very successfully in cities at the present time.

District Trustees.

Another contention urged most strongly against the new law is that the power given to the county board is undemocratic because it takes away from the people the right to elect their district trustees and places this power in the hands of the county board of education. This might be true, were it not for the fact that under the new law the system is readily responsive to the will of the people. The county board of education is elected directly by the people. The counties are not so large but that the public can know personally and keep close watch over the administration of their schools; the counties are not so large but that the people may know personally any person seeking a place on the county board of education; and the counties are not so large but that any one with a complaint or a suggestion may attend the meetings of the board.

Consolidation Impossible.

Under the old law, the people of the district who were freeholders and householders, were supposed to meet and elect three trustees for each district. Under the new law, the county board of education will appoint not more than three persons as trustees for each school to care for the property of the school, to look after its general interests, and to make to the county board of education reports of the progress and needs of the school, and of the will and sentiment of the people, women being eligible for appointment. The old plan was unsatisfactory in that, as a rule, a small per cent of the freeholders and householders in the district took part in the election of district trustees. They either knew nothing about it or did not care. There are

numbers of instances where only three persons were presnt at the place for election, and they voted themselves into office. Inasmuch as the chairman of the district trustees so elected chose the county board members, the first responsibility of said members was to the chairmen of the district trustees, making it impossible in practice to consolidate school districts, because of the unwillingness of trustees to relinquish their offices. There is no other explanation of the fact that Alabama is today behind the majority of other states in the consolidation of schools. Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee count their consolidated schools by the hundreds.

Community Divided.

Again, the trustees under the old law were constantly divided because each of the three usually had some relative whom he desired to teach the school. The trustees disagreed among themselves, therefore, and this resulted in a division of the community and the injury of the school, and for the further reason that no trustee could be removed except through impeachment proceedings. The provisions of the new law, whereby the county board of education, elected from the county at large, would be charged with the responsibility of conducting the schools of the county, and in the several districts, and would have the power to appoint a trustee or trustees for any school, would make it possible for the board to formulate a policy with the hope of carrying it out without the obstruction of unfriendly district trustees; for in the event that any trustee should fail to carry out the policy of the board, he could be summarily removed, the county board of education being responsible to the people for any abuse of its authority.

The Law Approved.

This plan also has the unqualified approval and endorsement of the United States Bureau of Education, the Southern Educational Association, and the Conference for Education in the South.

Consolidation and Transportation.

The second chief constructive feature of the new law is the provision it makes for better teachers and better schools, and this means the consolidation of schools and the transportation of pupils. The tendency of district trustees to multiply the number of schools is a matter of common observation, and our former machinery encouraged this process. It came to pass that the desire of the neighborhood to have a school of its own outweighed all other consideration, and inasmuch as the law favored it, the county superintendent and the county board offered little, if any objection, and there was constantly being born a struggling school with three new representatives of the people, and a new shoe-box type of schoolhouse, insanitary and ill-equipped.

Some Sources of Waste.

We find ourselves today, therefore, with three or four times as many schools as we have any need for, and a corresponding surplus of school officials. We are employing from one-fourth to one-third more teachers than there is necessity for and are maintaining a character of rural education much below what would be possible if the schools of the county were reorganized on a rational basis. There is but one remedy for short terms, cheap teachers, poor buildings, poor equipment, and lack of interest on the part of the community, namely, consolidated schools arranged with reference to convenience and accessibility. Under the new law the unwise multiplication of new school districts will be stopped, the already too numerous school districts will be consolidated, education adapted to rural needs will be provided, high school advantages of the kind needed in the country will be added, and good teachers with expert supervision will be attracted to them. This could never come to pass under the old system, and is one of the chief arguments in favor of the new law.

Some Objections Answered.

It may be objected that the condition of the roads in many sections of the State is not favorable to consolidation, and while there may be some force in such a claim, the classes of roads over which children would have to be transported would certainly be no worse than those over which they are now compelled to trudge; and any health-officer will testify that the danger under the latter plan, resulting from wet feet and the like, is much greater than any inconvenience or risk that would arise from transportation over bad roads. The fact is that transportation would aid materially in the building of better roads, and this in turn would make rural life more attractive, more profitable, and much more livable.

Minor Powers.

Other minor duties are assigned the county board of education, but these are in the interest of a more satisfactory operation of the powers already conferred, in reality providing only a little better machinery.

Remuneration of Members.

In the matter of remuneration of the county board members, under the old law each received $2.00 per day for a total of not more than ten days in any year. Under the new law the board members are to receive their actual traveling and hotel expenses incurred in attending the meetings of the board for a maximum of twelve sessions in any one year. This is essentially more nearly equitable than the old law which gave a fixed per diem to each and every member, though one might reside in the town where the board meeting was to be held and another might reside in the most remote part of the county. This was manifestly a discrimination, inasmuch as the expenses of the resident member were negligible, while the expenses of the distant member were considerable.

The County Unit. The county unit of school organization and administration prevails in twenty states. The plan of full county control was adopted in Maryland in 1865 and in Louisiana in 1870, and experience in these and all the other states organized on this basis abundantly justifies the wisdom of the strong county type of organization and administration of schools.

Present Tendencies. It is the concensus of opinion among students of educational administration that where the county is the unit of local civil government, it should be the unit of school government, and the general trend and tendency is unmistakably in that direction. This is evidenced by the fact that Wisconsin and Ohio have very recently abandoned a district and township system, respectively, for the county system, and the further fact that in ten states on the district basis, definite steps are being taken to change to the county system plan by legislative enactment.

EXPERT ADVICE

Commissioner of Education. The wisdom of this evolutionary tendency from the smaller to the larger unit of control is fully borne out by those who through experience and observation, are prepared to speak authoritatively on this question. The United States Commissioner of Education, Hon. P. P. Claxton, a Southerner, and for a number of years connected with the schools of North Carolina and Tennessee, where the county unit plan is in successful operation, suggests the following essentials of the county unit basis of organization for the most satisfactory administration of rural schools, basing the same upon studies of the various regulations in the states now organized on that basis.

"1. The county the unit of taxation and administration of schools (except that, in administration, independent city districts employing a superintendent would not be included).

2. The county school tax levied on all taxable property in the county, covered into the county treasury, and divided between the independent city districts and the rest of the county on a basis of school population.

3. The county school funds, including those raised by taxation and those received from the State, expended in such a way as would as nearly as possible insure equal educational opportunities in all parts of the county regardless of the amount raised in any particular part. (Any subdistrict should be permitted to raise by taxation or otherwise, additional funds to supplement the county funds, provided the subdistrict desired a better school plant, additional equipment, or a more efficient teaching force than could be provided from the county funds.)

4. A county board of education, in which is vested the administration of the public schools of the county (except those in independent city districts), composed of from five to nine persons, elected or appointed from the county at large; the board to be non-partisan; the term of office to be at least five years, and the terms arranged so that not more than one-fifth would expire in any one year.

5. A county superintendent of schools,—a professional educator, selected by the county board of education from within or without the county or State, for a long term (at least two years), who shall serve as the secretary and executive officer of the county board, and as such be the recognized head of the public schools in the county (except those in independent city districts).

6. District trustees in each subdistrict of the county, one or more persons, elected by the voters of the district or selected by the county board, to be custodians of the school property and to serve in an advisory capacity to the county board. The expenditures of local funds raised by the subdistrict would rest with the trustees subject to the approval of the county board.

7. The powers and duties of the county board of education:

(a) To select a county superintendent, who would be its officer in the performance of all of its other functions, and to appoint assistants as required.

(b) To have general control and management of the schools of the county.

(c) To submit estimates to the regular county taxing authority of the amount of money needed to support the schools.

(d) To regulate the boundaries of the school subdistricts of the county, making from time to time such alterations as in its judgment would serve the best interests of the county system.

(e) To locate and erect school buildings.

(f) To supply the necessary equipment.

(g) To fix the course of study and select textbooks (using the State course and State adopted textbooks in the states where action has been taken).

(h) To enforce the compulsory education laws.

(i) To employ teachers, fix their salaries and the salaries of other employees."

California. One of the foremost experts on rural school administration in this country, Dr. Ellwood P. Cubberly, Professor of Education in Leland Stanford University, California, lends his endorsement to the plan after which the Alabama law was fashioned, in the following language:

"The county system of school organization is merely an attempt to apply to our educational affairs the same commonsense principles of business administration which have been put into practice, in whole or in part, in other departments of our governmental service, and which have been found to give such excellent results everywhere in the business world. Under the system as best developed, the people elect a county board of education of five, who are analogous to a city board of education for a city. This board then selects and appoints a county superintendent of schools, and such deputy supervisors as are needed; determines the educational policy for the county, and sets financial limitations; manages the schools of the county, outside of cities having a city superintendent, as a unit and after much the same method of organization and management as has been found so effective in city and school organization; alters, consolidates, or abolishes the school districts, as the best interests of education require; oversees the work of its executive officers; determines the county school tax; appropriates all funds; employs teachers, fixes and pays them their salaries; provides equal educational advantages and length of term for all schools in the county, and free high school advantages for all children; acts as a board of control for any county high school, teachers' training school, or parental school which may be established; looks after the building and repair of all school buildings, and the purchase of all books and school supplies; and, in general, manages the scattered schools of the county as though they were a compact city school system. Under such a system of school organization, educational progress can be made in a year which it would take a decade or more to obtain under the district system."

South Dakota. State Superintendent Lugg of South Dakato says: "The county unit plan would

simplify school administration and would tend to prevent a few individuals in a given locality from depriving the children of that locality of the privileges of proper schooling. It would tend to professionalize the occupation of teaching. It would, if properly adjusted, make the county superintendent an educator instead of compelling him to be a politician. It would make the provision of high school facilities more uniform for all the people of the county, besides rendering maintenance of the schools more economical."

Massachusetts.

Hon. David Snedden, Commissioner of Education for Massachusetts, and a national authority on school administration, uses these words: "The rural country schools should be organized for school purposes almost identically like the cities."

Maryland.

has this to say: "The plan has been in vogue in Maryland since 1865."

State Superintendent Stevens of Maryland

Southern Conference for Education and Industry.

We are not left in doubt as to the proper administration of schools in the Southern States. The Southern Educational Association, the Conference for Education in the South, and the Southern Educational Council, composed of the most distinguished educators and business men, after an exhaustive study of the problem, reported at the Louisville meeting in 1914, announcing a general policy for the administration and finance of a State school system. Parts of this report pertinent to the issue now under discussion, are as follows:

"The administration of the county school system should be vested in a county board of education consisting of not less than three nor more than nine members elected by the people, for terms of six years, these terms to be so arranged that not more than two expire in any one year.

The county superintendent should be elected by the county board and should serve as its executive officer. His salary should be fixed by this board. He should have a corps of assistants commensurate with

the school population of the county. These assistants should be nominated by the superintendent and confirmed by the county board. In the typical county the corps should include—

(a) A county supervisory teacher for the elementary schools.
(b) A county supervisor of negro schools.
(c) A county director of elementary agricultural education.
(d) A county director of girls' home arts.

Each school district should have from one to three trustees appointed by the county board of education to have charge of the school property and to serve in an advisory capacity to the county superintendent and county board of education.

The school district should be in some instances a municipality which may or may not be independent of the county school authorities.

The rural schools deserve special interest. The State and county educational authorities should put forth an effort to make them efficient. The following standards are suggested:

(a) Each rural school should own at least ten acres of land.
(b) The schoolhouse should be put to the maximum use as the center of the community's life.
(c) The school should own an adequate home for its principal.
(d) The principal should be trained in agriculture.
(e) Each school should have at least one teacher who has had proper training in domestic science and household economics."

That the law in Alabama conforms almost literally to the principles enunciated above, will be manifest to any careful reader.

EXPERT TESTIMONY

Louisiana. The question naturally arises as to whether or not such a law will operate satisfactorily in Alabama, and fortunately we have a concrete illustration of precisely what we may expect from results in Louisiana, where after many years of county organization embodying substantially the Alabama plan, the people are abundantly satisfied and extraordinary progress is being made. This explains the fact that in educational efficiency, Louisiana ranks thirty-ninth among the states of the Union, while Alabama's rank is forty-eighth. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Hon. T. H. Harris, is outspoken in fa-

vor of the system, and he cites its strong features as follows:

1. A small board for the management of all the schools of the county.
2. The board elects the county superintendent which removes the office from politics and insures the election of a competent man.
3. Unwise local influences are removed and questions settled upon merit and not at the wire-pulling of men of local influence.
4. Teachers are selected upon their merit; not because they are related to the district trustees or board members.
5. The consolidation of country schools is promoted. The county board abandons schools and establishes new ones as the needs of the children dictate. There are no local board members to consent and no jobs to lose.
6. Supervision is made possible. The superintendent cannot supervise efficiently the work of the schools if he is required to keep several hundred local board members satisfied.
7. It injects business methods into the management of schools. With no axes to grind, no favors to reward, a small board in charge of the schools of the county does its best to provide the best possible schools for all the children.

Mobile County. If a more specific instance of the probable effect of the new law in Alabama is demanded, the case of Mobile county is pertinent. As has already been said, the essentials of this law in modified form have been applied there for many years. The average length of term for white schools in the cities of Alabama is 174 days, and for rural districts, 118 days. The average length of term for the white schools of the State is 133 days. In the case of Mobile county, we find that the length of term for the white city schools is 174 days, and for rural schools, 169 days, or a difference of only five days, the average for all white schools being 172 days.

Equality of Opportunity. It will appear, therefore, that the extremes for Mobile county, namely, the length of term for the white city schools, and the length of term for white rural schools, differ by only five days. The terms, therefore, are approximate-

ly equal for all schools in the county, whether located in the country or in the city. No such conditions exist anywhere else in the State, but on the other hand we find everywhere a great discrepancy.

The Explanation. There is no other way to explain the apparent equality of educational opportunity in the city and rural districts of Mobile county except that they are controlled by one and the same board; and the further fact that the average term of the white schools is 37 days longer than the average term for the State, is evidence of the efficacy of the Mobile county plan. Not only is the term longer in Mobile county than elsewhere, but the character of the supervision is more consistent, more regular, and more proficient, and this statement is borne out by the fact that the county superintendent of education, who is also the city superintendent of schools, is now completing his fifteenth year of service. He has a corps of assistants under his direction who visit the rural schools with the same regularity that they visit the city schools, and under their guidance, every school in the county has been thoroughly graded. There is still another way in which the schools of Mobile county outrank all others in the State. The county board has authority to consolidate schools and transport pupils, and for that reason there are more consolidated schools there than in all the other counties of the State combined, and correspondingly fewer one-room schools.

The Logical Conclusion. The Alabama law for the county organization and administration of schools is progressive in spirit, democratic in nature, large in its aim, and boundless in the possibilities of good to be derived by the children of the State from its operation. It is in keeping with the best educational thought of the times, follows the

marked tendency of the United States to increase the size of the administrative units and make the educational administrative units co-terminous with the county, which is the unit for the administration of the other departments of government. In other words, a strong, balanced county organization now takes the place of a loosely constructed, weak and inefficient system.

Recapitulation. The main benefits to be derived from the operation of this law may be recapitulated as follows:

1. Effective administration of the schools of the county by a capable board of five members elected at large from the county, having large powers and responsible to all the people of the county; a board that will have no fear in doing its full duty and whose treatment of all subdivisions of the county will be equitable.

2. Supervision of the schools of the county by a professionally trained county superintendent elected by and responsible to the county board for his actions.

3. Consolidation of small rural schools into graded central schools, with the attendant advantages of classified work, better schoolhouses and equipment, better teachers, social-center activities, and socializing influences upon parents and children.

4. Transportation of pupils, where necessary, making it possible for children in remote places to attend school without physical discomfort or danger.

Conclusion. The illustrations and arguments might be longer drawn out, but it is difficult to see how any fairminded man who will take the pains to study the question at all, could doubt the wisdom of that legislation which means the effective reorganization of our county school system.

COUNTY ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION LAW

No. 220.) (S. 129—Lee.

AN ACT

To Provide for a County Board of Education, to Prescribe the Method of Election of the Members Thereof, to Define the Powers and Duties of the Board, and to Require the Boards of Education in Incorporated Cities and Towns to Make an Enumeration of Children of School Age.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of Alabama:

1. That from and after the third Saturday in November, 1916, the public schools of each of the several counties of the State, except those in incorporated cities and towns, shall be under the immediate direction and control of a county board of education consisting of five members. The county board of education of each county shall be elected by the qualified electors of the county. All members of the county board of education of any county shall be persons of good moral character with at least a fair elementary education, of good standing in their respective communities, and known for their honesty, business ability, public spirit and interest in the good of public education.

2. That on the first Saturday in November, 1916, the qualified electors of the county shall elect five members of the county board of education; provided, that the five persons receiving the highest number of votes from the county at large shall be declared the members of the county board of education; and provided, that the two members of the board so elected receiving the highest number of votes shall hold office for a term of six years; that the two members receiving the next highest number of votes shall hold office for a term of four years; and that the member so elected receiving the lowest number of votes shall hold office for a term of two years; provided further, that at the general election of State and county officers in November, 1918, and biennially thereafter, a member or members shall be elected for terms of six years to succeed those whose term or terms of office shall expire at that time; provided that any member of the board of education shall hold office until a successor has been elected and qualified.

3. That the county board of education of each of the several counties, elected as herein provided, shall meet in the office of the county

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superintendent of education of the county withi
election of such board or any member thereof, qu
electing one of its members president. The president shall be entitled to vote on all questions. The county superintendent of education shall be the secretary and executive officer of the board and shall attend all meetings of the same, but he shall not have the right of a vote in the board.

4. That the county boards of education shall have entire control of the public schools, unless otherwise provided by law, within their respective counties. They shall make rules and regulations for the government of the schools, see that the teachers perform their duties, and exercise such powers consistent with the law as in their judgment will best subserve the cause of education. The board shall have the right to acquire, purchase, by the institution of condemnation proceedings if necessary, lease, receive, hold, transmit, and convey the title to real and personal property for school purposes, except where otherwise provided, by and in the name of the county board of education, to sue and contract, all contracts to be made after resolutions adopted by the board and spread on its minutes and signed by its president. All process shall be executed by service on the executive officer of the board.

5. In addition to the duties hereinbefore prescribed, the county boards of education shall perform the following duties:

(1) Select a county superintendent of education, prescribe his duties in addition to those required by law, and the amount of his salary; provided, that no member of a county board of education shall be eligible for election as county superintendent of education during the term for which he was elected as a member of the board of education.

(2) Elect a county treasurer of public school funds.

(3) Elect to hold office until the next regular election as provided under this act, the successor to any member of the county board of education whose place may have become vacant by death, resignation, or other cause; provided, that in case the county board fails for a period of thirty days to fill said vacancy, the State superintendent of education shall have authority to appoint a member to fill the same. At the next general election held in November, a successor shall be elected for the unexpired term as provided by section 2 of this act for the election of other members.

(4) Select upon the nomination of the county superintendent of education, assistant superintendents, supervisors and such office force as may be necessary, and fix their salaries.

(5) Select teachers for the several schools of the county upon nomination of the county superintendent of education, fix their salaries, erect, repair, and furnish schoolhouses, fix all wages of employees, determine all incidental expenses, and have entire control of the public school funds of the county, except as otherwise provided by law.

(6) Fix the boundaries of school districts and locate schools with reference to convenience, efficiency, and economy.

(7) Consolidate schools and provide for the transportation of pupils at public expense.

(8) Upon the agreement of the boards of education of adjoining counties, authorize a child residing in one county to attend school in another county, and it shall be permitted to do so when the school in the other county is nearer than any school in its own county; upon the request of parents or guardians, a city board of education and a county board of education may make any just and equitable arrangement for the attendance of children of the city at the schools of the county, and for the attendance of the children of the county at the schools of the city, and they shall do so when it can be done without injury to the schools of either the county or the city.

(9) Control the public school funds as provided by law.

(10) Appoint for every school in the county discreet, competent and reliable person or persons of mature years, not exceeding three in number, residing near to the schoolhouse, and having the respect and confidence of the people of the community, to serve as trustee or trustees of the school, to care for the property and to look after the general interests of the school, and to make to the county board of education, through the county superintendent of education, from time to time, reports of the progress and needs of the schools, and of the will and sentiment of the people in regard to the school; but such person or persons shall not be paid for such service out of the public school funds.

(11) Enforce compulsory attendance as required by law.

(12) Act as promptly as possible on cases of appeal by pupils suspended by teachers.

(13) Dismiss county superintendents, assistant county superintendents, and teachers for incompetency, improper or immoral conduct, or inattention to duty, or whenever in their opinion the best interests of the schools may require.

(14) Select resident persons to enumerate the scholastic population of all children between the ages of seven and twenty-one years as provided by law, and to require that in enumerating the scholastic population, the name of the child, the name of the parent or guardian, the age of the child, the school to which it belongs and the distance to the nearest school, be recorded, and also the fact as to whether the child is able to read and write. White children and negro children shall be reported in separate lists, and in any town or city maintaining a public school system, the board of education of that incorporated city or town, is hereby empowered and required to enumerate the scholastic population of that city or town, as provided by law; and in addition

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to giving the name of the child, and the na
dians, and stating whether the child can re
the street and number of the house in whic

6. The members of the county board of ed
the public school funds of the county their
expenses incurred in attending meetings of the board; provided that such expenditures shall be allowed for not more than twelve meetings in any one year. The members of the county board shall be paid in like manner as provided for the compensation paid to teachers; provided, that they shall not be required to hold State teachers' certificates. County superintendents shall be paid a minimum salary of $1,000 a year, and after September 30, 1915, shall engage in no other form of remunerative work.

7. All laws or parts of laws in conflict with the provisions of this act, except such as make provision for local taxation for school purposes, are hereby repealed, and in case any part of this law is declared unconstitutional, the parts not so declared unconstitutional shall remain in full force and effect as the law of the State.

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